

IRELAND'S OPPORTUNITY

A PLEA FOR SETTLEMENT
BY CONFERENCE

BY

“UNIFICUS”

SCHOLAR OF TRINITY
COLLEGE, DUBLIN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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LONDON

P. S. KING & SON, LTD.

ORCHARD HOUSE, WESTMINSTER

1916

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PREFACE

THE main part of this pamphlet had been written before the recent deplorable revolt, and has now to be published without extensive revision, to which cause I must ask my readers to attribute any statements or turns of expression which may now appear out of date. It had been my intention not to publish till the War was nearing its end, but recent events have so reopened the "Irish Question" in its entirety that the present seems to be the opportune moment to make this appeal.

Before the rising any discussion of Irish affairs seemed irrelevant, but it is now plain that what seemed then a mere matter of domestic politics is in reality of Imperial importance. A speedy and satisfactory settlement of the Irish difficulties has now a most vital connexion with that one great purpose on which all our hearts are set—the winning of the War.

Some change in the government of Ireland is acknowledged to be a necessity. My purpose is to indicate a method, the only method, I believe, by which a really good government can

be set up, and a lasting settlement of our difficulties secured. This pamphlet does not purport to give in itself a solution of the difficulties ; it is meant rather as a finger-post, pointing out the best road along which a solution may be reached. If any one hopes to find here an incantation to exorcise party spirit, or a cut-and-dried scheme of a settlement on the Home Rule question, he will be disappointed. He will, however, find a statement of the present situation and suggestions as to a policy which would lead to a settlement. What is set down here is nothing new or brilliant or original, but a frank statement of the case for an Irish Conference. This pamphlet should not be an end but a beginning. If it gives food for thought, excites others to express their opinions, and generally sets the ball rolling, it will have accomplished its purpose.

While my appeal is mainly to Irishmen, I may perhaps be allowed to say a few words here to English readers in regard to this subject which is of such vital importance to us all. Though I believe that it is Irishmen alone who can find a remedy for the difficulties of Ireland, yet much depends on the English attitude at present. I beg that Englishmen may refrain from recriminations about the past, and especially about the revolt and its causes. It is of little value to fix the blame for this heartrending outbreak ; what is of value is to ensure that no such outbreak will ever happen again. That can be ensured

only if we think tolerantly and act wisely now. Secondly, I beg that so far as possible the settlement may be left in Irish hands. We are much more likely to reach an agreement if left to ourselves, than if an attempt is made to drive us. Lastly, I beg that England may judge of Ireland not by the actions of a few misguided men at home, but by the actions and the sacrifices of those many Irishmen who have laid down their lives on every battle-field of this War.

In a situation which is changing so rapidly as the present it is impossible to see how matters will stand even at the time when this pamphlet comes into the hands of its readers. It is possible that by then some kind of Irish Advisory Council such as is mooted at present may actually be set up. If that be so, the Council might in practice become a Conference of the nature outlined in these pages. If a Council is formed it cannot be more than a temporary expedient, paving the way for a final and permanent settlement. In finding such a settlement a Council or Conference will need the continual backing of all who have at heart the interests both of Ireland and of the Empire as a whole.

“UNIFICUS”

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INTRODUCTION

THIS pamphlet is the work of a young graduate of Dublin University, who, after a distinguished academic career, obtained a commission and left Trinity College to serve his King and Country in the War.

It is, as its title declares, an appeal for a Conference, between men of different schools of political thought, respecting the mode of Irish Government. Attempts thus to start joint constructive action have hitherto been unsuccessful.

Early in 1913, when many thought it was clear that the Government of Ireland Bill would, in some form, become law in 1914, some, holding that the chief duty of men of goodwill was to secure its satisfactory amendment, formed in Dublin the "Non-Party Committee," which sought to represent all who desired "the conclusion of an agreement between Nationalists and Unionists as to the form and machinery of Irish Government." In spite of a measure of encouragement received in the following autumn from the English Unionist press, our labours were in vain, because we failed to get enough support in

Ireland to justify us in coming prominently forward, the majority of Irish Unionists preferring at that time to rely upon the physical-force movement in Ulster. The fact that response to appeals for settlement was meagre was due to our being divided not so much by distinctions of real thought and feeling as by membership of separate political groups in which we were born and brought up. Loyalty to our traditional grouping has often seemed to forbid fresh thought on the part of any of us.

The occasion upon which the Government of Ireland Bill was passed, in 1914, to come into operation, along with a promised Amending Bill, at some future date, did not seem an occasion opportune for action on our part. But in the autumn of 1915, when it seemed to some that constructive work might be attempted during the winter, I addressed to the Unionist press communications which were widely quoted and generously commented upon by the Nationalist press both in Ireland and in America. I urged that "those Protestants and Conservatives who desire an Irish reconciliation should be drawing together," and that it was "not too late to relinquish our time-honoured but now almost meaningless party shibboleths, and to strike out in a new direction, resolved no longer to hold aloof, vainly mourning loss of power, resolved on the contrary to co-operate with our fellow-countrymen, and to do our share of

work towards building up a new and a better Ireland."

If I refer to my own attitude, it is merely because it must be typical of the attitude of many. I confess that my interests are with the Conservatives, that I regard the Constitution as of immeasurable worth, and am concerned chiefly for the stability of the State. And for many years I have had to watch the steady decline of Conservative influence in Ireland, in a country which, by virtue of its agricultural interest, of its peasant proprietorship, of its religion, of its aristocratic predilections, might have been expected to become a steadying influence in the hasty world. And one could not but recognize that the decline was largely due to the mental attitude of Irish Unionists. Yet in that body of men, if even now something can be done to secure their participation in local government and public business, there will be found to be still much of what is best and most useful in Ireland, no matter how ineffective they have collectively proved as a separate section of the body politic.

As deplorable as the decline of the Conservative interest has been that of the Protestant interest. Of course our decline was inevitable, in that our position in the country was artificial, enjoying as we did a social prerogative conferred by the State for the political purposes of long ago. But this natural decline has been much increased

by the identification of Protestantism, in the mind of the country, with opposition to change in the mode of Irish government. When the change, in spite of us, comes, it will not do away with religious differences, but it will make it impossible for lines of cleavage in religion to coincide any longer with lines of cleavage in politics. This will be greatly to the advantage both of religion and of politics.

But clear though it ought to be that it is to the interest of Irishmen in general, and of Protestants and Conservatives in particular, to secure a settlement in Ireland, there is a wider issue to-day ; there is the need of the Empire, and the responsibility of Britain to see to it that a settlement is really reached. It is a pity that the Empire should have to be worried with the Irish problem now that there is the Great War to prosecute. But the Irish problem really is not a side issue. Imperialism is on its trial to-day where they sing "Rule, Britannia!" as well as where they sing "Deutschland über Alles"; and it is on its trial in a very special sense in Ireland. When Home Rule has come into operation, it will then be Irish Nationalism that will be on its trial. But the question for the moment is whether the new Imperialism can accept and can adapt itself to the principle of Nationalism.

For it must be remembered that the Irish

question is partly practical and partly sentimental. The practical case for reform is that the bureaucracy is a clumsy instrument of government, and has failed. If it be suggested that it is only the administrators that have failed, the answer is that if we once have a good administrator in Ireland, he is sure, by all analogy of our past history, to be succeeded by a bad one ; there are no constitutional means of securing continuity of policy. But the Irish question is even more a matter of sentiment. Politicians seem liable to forget that sentiment counts for more than aught else in human life, that many people hold such sentiments as love, loyalty, patriotism, to be the things best worth living for or dying for. Nor can the sentiment of nationality be destructible in a country which has had a history so entirely peculiar as that of Ireland. If Imperialism, then, can adapt itself to the principle of Nationalism, it will thereby have achieved an Imperial triumph indeed.

The destructive forces in our social system bursting forth of late have laid a substantial part of our metropolis in ruins, while many homes, in Ireland and in England, are left to mourn the loss of precious lives of brave soldiers who did their duty, or of ardent idealists lured to a criminal enterprise. That is what the forces of destruction can do. And are the forces of construction now to have another chance ? It ought, at any

rate, to be understood that everything is at stake; the cause of law and order, Ireland's relation to the Empire, the stability of society, the whole range of the interests of civilization, all this is at stake in Ireland to-day.

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June 1, 1916

Ireland's Opportunity

CHAPTER I

THE WAR AND IRISH POLITICS

THE history of Ireland during the last few years is one of opportunities missed and new opportunities strangely given. The course of the Home Rule controversy before the War alternated between outbursts of intense party bitterness and genuine attempts to reach a settlement, but for one reason or another these attempts always proved failures.

For many months we witnessed a situation which gradually but surely grew worse, a drift towards disaster which most of us felt absolutely powerless to check. Towards the end of July came the failure of the Buckingham Palace Conference and the shooting at Bachelor's Walk. Then, at the instant when our worst fears seemed on the point of being realized, came those swift and tremendous events which changed all. On the very brink of the precipice which we had seen and yet were plunging over, we were caught

by a mightier force and hurled back. Some greeted the War almost with joy; all agreed that if it had to be it could not have come at a better time for Ireland.

It may be that if we could have foreseen then as we see now the fearful character of the struggle on which we were starting we should have felt that peace in Ireland was being purchased at far too high a cost. And yet, even now when we do know something of the horror and misery of War, of the lives poured out like water, and the griefs which every one of us has had to bear, even now we can still have a feeling that civil strife at home would have been worse (in its spirit if not in its results), that it is better to be fighting a united fight in a high cause than to have engaged in an unnatural and dishonourable struggle of Irishman against Irishman.

The War gave a new opportunity for an Irish settlement, but this was not seized as it might have been. When the first thrill went through the country all were ready to hail one another as brothers, but mistakes were again made on all sides, and as the future was left uncertain discontent was soon allowed to rise once more.

Nevertheless the War worked many changes for the better. Though a small section of Irishmen held sullenly aloof, yet the fact remains that the great bulk of our people and practically all the leaders of importance agreed that this fight was our fight, and that Ireland must play

her part to the best of her power. A war in defence of freedom and justice against tyranny found nearly all Ireland united in support of the Empire and of the free States of Europe .

At the same time we were gaining a new sense of nationality in Ireland, a new sense of pride in being neither Unionists nor Nationalists but simply Irishmen. The thrill we felt in the deeds of our Irish Regiments was little affected by whether they hailed from North or South. All gloried in the exploits of both the Inniskillings and the Munsters. All were proud to think what an extraordinary proportion of the foremost generals and admirals were Irishmen. In home affairs also we were drawn closer together. Recruiting committees were composed of men of very divergent views in politics. All the various schemes of relief work and the agencies which the War brought into being were run on similar lines.

The nation, as a whole, was finding itself, finding that it is a part of the Empire, and that it has at the same time its own individuality and internal unity. We had hope that that unity might be found to be lasting, and that through our common trial we might come to real peace at home.

Nevertheless, we were always conscious of a disquieting undercurrent which might overthrow our hopes of peace. We knew that pre-War controversies were not really settled, and that

some among us at any rate were only awaiting an opportunity to raise them afresh. At the beginning of the War we all had buried the hatchet, but every man marked carefully the spot where his hatchet was buried, against the time he should need it again.

This uncertainty, combined with many other factors, gave the extremists their opportunity. Their scheming we knew, but the actual outbreak came as a surprise. It seemed to be the final blow to all the hopes of peace in Ireland. These men who claimed to love Ireland, and to be fighting for Ireland, had dealt her the cruellest blow of all.

Suddenly, almost miraculously, out of this terrible disaster came a new hope, and we are now presented with an opportunity better than all those that preceded it. The division in Ireland has taken a new line ; the fight is now seen to be not between Unionist and Nationalist, but between the forces of order and the forces of anarchy. If order is to prevail, an agreement between the constitutional parties in Ireland is essential. The " Irish question " is seen to be an Imperial question ; in its settlement the interests of the whole Empire are involved.

Moreover, the system of Dublin Castle Government has been proved utterly unsound. The Irish Executive commanded the respect of no single section of the country—Unionist, Nationalist, or Sinn Féiner. For a system so entirely

discredited a substitute must be found, and it can only be found by agreement among Irishmen.

We now have a great opportunity, but it is the last opportunity. Either agreement will be reached now, or if not, if Home Rule again becomes a party question, then whichever party triumphs it will, in reality, be a triumph for anarchy, and we may say farewell to all hopes of peace in Ireland for a generation to come.

There is an old comparison of the situation in Ireland to our national vehicle, the jaunting-car. On one side sits the Unionist looking at the panorama at his side of the road. On the other sits the Nationalist, viewing a totally different landscape. Neither troubles to turn round to glance at the other's view, and it is inconvenient for them even to enter into conversation with one another. On the box seat sits the English Government, looking straight ahead at yet a third view, paying no attention to those whom he is driving, intent simply on keeping his horse on its feet as he traverses a very uneven road.

Now, however, we may say that the driver has proved himself wholly incapable of managing his car ; the horse has fallen ; the driver is unseated ; all is at a standstill. The travellers are forced to alight. This, however, has immediate advantages. They now can look one

another straight in the face, and can also look at each other's landscape, unseen before. The old driver is impossible, but their journey must continue. If they are sensible men they will soon come to an agreement by which they can continue their journey, better friends now on account of their mishap.

At present the situation may be summed up by saying that while we have amongst us the spirit which makes a settlement possible, that spirit needs to be focused in a plan. Our difficulties are not of the kind to which we can apply the principles of *solvitur ambulando*. The obstacles are great and thorny and cannot be overcome by ignoring them, or by pious hopes and the feeling of goodwill. Clear thought is needed, honest grappling with the subject, a considered and definite policy.

That political thought in Ireland has been up to now practically non-existent may seem a strange statement to some. It appears on the surface that Ireland has been absolutely obsessed with politics, but much of it has been merely the politics of fishwives, consisting of catchwords and abuse. Our discussions have been too much about persons, and too little about policies. Real thinking and education on political matters have been at a very low ebb. To take the most obvious instance, what does the average Irishman, of either party, really know about Home Rule? He can shout for it or abuse it with the utmost

vigour, but of what it would actually be like he has very little idea. It is positively amazing how little attempt has been made to explain to the people the provisions of the Home Rule Act, or how it would work in practice. It is almost impossible to discover any books, pamphlets, or articles which attempt to forecast the work before an Irish Parliament, or the machinery of government which it might evolve. The Nationalist party and the Nationalist press ought surely to have started long before now on a campaign of education in the responsibilities and the tasks of a self-governing Ireland. This is but one example of the prevailing lack of knowledge. Examples as damaging to the Unionist side could easily be given.

Most of the thinking on Home Rule seems to have been done in England. Nationalist Ireland has been content to say that she wants it, but Englishmen have drawn up the Bill, and arranged the details, details which in some cases all of us in Ireland thoroughly dislike. There has been in recent years a plentiful output of books on Ireland, but nearly all seem primarily intended for English consumption. Nearly all have been critical and descriptive, giving "new light on the Irish problem," or holding up our country as a mass of perplexing contradictions. These books are many of them well written, brilliantly epigrammatic and paradoxical, but scarcely any of them with a constructive purpose. There are

exceptions, of course, such as Mr. G. W. Russell's *Co-operation and Nationality* or Mr. Erskine Childers's *Framework of Home Rule*, but their general trend has been mainly critical, and calculated to mystify as much as to enlighten.

We have all had our eyes fixed not so much on Ireland as on the British voter, and we have written to instruct him, that he may vote aright. Much of our political speech-making has had the same object, and has greatly lost its real effect thereby.

Are we not rather weary of spending so much of our energy in trying to persuade Englishmen that our own party's point of view with regard to Ireland is the right one (a task not difficult, for the Englishman is ready to take on trust any kind of absurdity with regard to Ireland), not caring what he really thinks so long as we can safely shepherd him into the right fold at the next general election? All this has been as bad for English as for Irish politics.

At present, however, we know that, notwithstanding the rising, England can take only a comparatively small interest in our affairs, while after the War there will be so many difficult matters for her to decide that for a long time Ireland will be but a side issue. But if the Irish question becomes again a side issue for England, it will still remain absolutely vital for us. English politicians might indeed patch up some kind of makeshift settlement at the end of the War,

but it would be hastily and awkwardly constructed by men whose best thoughts were being given to other matters. Can we in Ireland permit questions of such importance to the whole future of our country to be decided in so haphazard a fashion?

As matters stand only Irishmen themselves will give much thought to Irish affairs, but for Irishmen this thought is a duty. It may, of course, be said that the one and only thing to be thought of now is the War, and that any diverting of attention to other issues is something like treachery. But, speaking seriously, is there a single man left at home at present (and it is mainly to the older men who are left at home that we must look) who finds that his entire attention is devoted to the War? The only possible exceptions are those few painstaking but misguided individuals who spend the entire day in trying to master contradictory reports in the newspapers and the opinions of popular novelists posing as war experts. Even for such people some change of subject is probably the only hope of avoiding a lunatic asylum.

Moreover, the fact is that in England and every other belligerent country the wiser men are already thinking out the problems which will arise at the end of the War. It will be simple folly if we in Ireland do not follow their example.

Irishmen really know best what is wanted in

Ireland. This is of course axiomatic with Nationalists. Though it might appear to be less in accordance with Unionist principles, yet in reality the attitude of Ulster throughout the controversy has been the same—namely, that Ulster and Ulster alone knows what is good for her, and all the opinion of others to the contrary is not to shake her determination.

We can now manage without disturbance to open negotiations among ourselves. Nationalist Ireland can try to do what Sir Edward Carson once complained she had never tried, to “win” instead of bullying Ulster. Unionist Ulster, not now a mere minority fearing to be coerced, but a province standing on her own feet as she has proved her right to stand, can negotiate directly with Nationalist Ireland. Southern Unionists, one might hope, may take on themselves the function of mediators.

No one can say that if negotiations are entered on they are certain to succeed, but they do hold out a big hope of success. It is time we said good-bye to some of our pessimism, and, looking at the things which have already happened to draw us together, face our difficulties fairly, and see if as honest and patriotic men we can find a way to surmount them.

It is a great task which lies before us now, to grapple with difficulties which have baffled statesmen after statesmen for generations, to

seek by peaceful means the settlement of a conflict too long conducted in illwill and obscured by partisanship, and so to bring into being the united Ireland of our dreams. It is a task worthy of our best efforts ; if we put them forth now we can succeed.

CHAPTER II

POLICIES FOR IRELAND—PAST AND FUTURE

THE lines of action possible in the Home Rule controversy may be conveniently classed under four headings. We may term them the Nationalist Policy, the Unionist Policy, the English Policy, and the Irish Policy. It will be shown here how of these four the first three have been tried and have all been found wanting, either because they were purely party policies, and so were too narrow to grasp the whole problem, or, in the case of the English Policy, because framed by men who did not thoroughly understand the situation. The last, the Irish Policy—that is, an agreed settlement among Irishmen—is as yet untried, and it alone holds out a real prospect of success.

THE NATIONALIST POLICY

The full success of the Nationalist Policy would mean that the Home Rule Act should be brought into complete operation for the whole of Ireland, even against the wishes and in face of the resistance of a section of the people. To some

Nationalists this may still seem the right course, but to all who are not blind to the facts of the situation in the North of Ireland it must be apparent that however desirable it is impracticable. The Ulster Unionists are determined that they will not be driven under an Irish Parliament against their will. To drive them means the use of force, and the use of force means resistance and bloodshed. Coercion would very probably fail, and it is still more certain that public opinion, especially after the War, would never allow it to be attempted. Even supposing that Ulster's resistance could be forcibly beaten down, and an Irish Government established on the wreckage, could any true Nationalist look on that with satisfaction? Could any peace or order or good government follow such an ill-omened inauguration? Even to attempt the coercion of Ulster would be a denial of those very principles on which Nationalism takes its stand, the rights of freemen to choose their own government and to develop as they will. It would be a repetition of the tragedy which took place in the last century in Hungary, where the Magyars, after their heroic struggle for national liberty, immediately used that liberty to suppress the rights and aspirations of other races.

THE UNIONIST POLICY

The thoroughgoing Unionist Policy, opposition to any form of Irish Parliament, is equally

impracticable, since it fails utterly to take into account the strength and persistence of Irish Nationalism. The oft-repeated statement that Ireland does not really desire Home Rule has been disproved by many events in recent years. One example is the rapid rise of the Volunteers. It is notable also that nearly all the successful recruiting appeals in Ireland have been appeals to national feeling. To say that "Ireland does not want Home Rule" is sheer and downright nonsense.

To suppose that if the present scheme was wrecked Ireland would settle down happily under the Union is simply to misunderstand the whole driving force of Irish Nationalism. With most Nationalists the question is not one of expediency or material advantages, but simply of right, the right of a nation to control its national destiny. And, after all, this is the principle which all of us, English and Irish alike, are accepting as axiomatic in the present War, that the small nations of Europe have their rights as nations, against which the will of the stronger must not be allowed to prevail. Another defeat for Home Rule would never be looked on as a final defeat, for Ireland would not accept what she believes to be unjust. She would simply start again on the old fight, which to the Unionist appears so unfruitful and to the Nationalist so glorious, the fight for what she believes to be her rights and liberties.

The struggle would, however, recommence with

renewed bitterness. If Home Rule did not come there would certainly be bloodshed. Any Government which should repeal the Act would have to be prepared to exercise the strongest measures in suppressing public opinion, and to apply anew the whole machinery of coercion, such as existed last century and is now generally condemned. There is no other alternative.

There would also be an outburst of anti-English feeling which would be shared by many who are now most anxious to see friendly relations between the two countries. Never again would Ireland put any trust in the word or honour of England. The feeling in Ireland would be something as follows: "England at last offered us our just rights and passed the Bill. On the strength of that she claimed our support in the War and we gave it, claimed our men and we gave them. Now when she has conquered and is secure she flings our trust and our confidence back in our face. Here is treachery as bad as any we had suffered from before. The Sinn Feiners and anti-recruiters were right. We were fools to have trusted England, and never again will we trust her."

There can be small doubt that such would be the result of a rigid Unionist Policy after the War. It would play right into the hands of the extremist sections. It may be just possible, though only by coercion and bloodshed. On considerations of honour, and no less on those of expediency, it is out of the question.

To force through the full policy of either opposing party is bound then to land us in disaster. During the latter part of the controversy in 1914 this was practically admitted by both sides. The Liberal Party expressly declared that no attempt would be made to coerce Ulster, and although the Unionists made no such definite declaration, yet the many suggestions as to "Home Rule All Round," the exclusion of Ulster, and so forth, showed that most of them recognized that some change from the present position was inevitable. Both in England and Ireland the widespread feeling was that a compromise had to be found, and the months immediately preceding the outbreak of War were mainly spent in seeking it.

The finding of a compromise, of some kind of *modus vivendi* for the two opposing parties, is the real question before us now. What are called here the English Policy and the Irish Policy are two different methods of reaching it, either by negotiations between English parties or by agreement among Irishmen themselves.

THE ENGLISH POLICY

In nearly all the negotiations and "conversations" regarding a settlement which took place during the Home Rule controversy one cardinal mistake was made. The negotiators were English party leaders, not Irishmen, though Irishmen were chiefly concerned in the result. From this

it came about that a solution was sought along entirely wrong lines.

After a period of uncertainty, English opinion hardened into the belief that the solution must be the exclusion from Home Rule of those parts of Ireland which were opposed to it. From that time the controversy raged round the extent of that exclusion, four counties or six counties, or a "clean cut" of the whole of Ulster. The proposal is a characteristic example of the English love of the *via media*, the belief that, given two opposing parties, the right course is to grant part to one and part to the other, so probably satisfying neither. "Three-quarters of Ireland a nation." "No Home Rule"—for Ulster.

Even in England few recommended exclusion on its merits. It was put forward mainly as the best available means of avoiding civil war, a disagreeable necessity to be endured in order to avoid worse evils, just as a man submits to the amputation of a limb in order to save his life. It found many apologists, but no friends. The truth was expressed by Lord Loreburn in the House of Lords when he said, "The policy of exclusion has not a single friend that I am aware of in this House or out of it."

It is, nevertheless, most probable that if war had not intervened, English statesmen would have put the expedient into operation, simply through inability to see any better course. But in Ireland the proposal has always been looked

upon with deep distrust and dislike, mingled with contempt. Ireland has often been a dumping-ground for unwanted and hastily concocted experiments, but few of them have been less wanted or worse concocted than this.

Leaving aside the initial difficulties, as to how much of Ulster should be excluded, the other drawbacks to the scheme are immense. It seems impossible to conceive that somewhere on the railway line between Dublin and Belfast one would come into a different country, with different laws and different regulations. Exclusion means among other difficulties all kinds of complications of governmental machinery, the duplication of our already far too numerous boards, continual friction where the two sections of the country come into contact. It would create endless difficulties for the Irish Government, and would leave Ulster in a most unsatisfactory position, neither in England nor in Ireland, sharing the disadvantages of both, and gaining few of the benefits of either. To nearly every one in Ireland the policy of exclusion has seemed ludicrous, and, though possible, yet totally inadequate. It means, to adapt the old phrase, "Relegating all the laws of statesmanship to Saturn," and, we may add, all hope of Irish unity to the Greek Kalends.

The truth is that while each of the Irish parties has made a show of solemnly discussing it, yet they have all the time believed it to be unwork-

able. They have been hoping that eventually the impracticability of the scheme would become evident, and that with the collapse of the policy of compromise the whole Home Rule question would be settled in their own favour. With this hope in their minds, Irishmen have never given the exclusion proposal the severe criticism it deserves.

The situation seems much like the old story of Solomon and the babies. England like a modern Solomon has been holding up before us the living body of Ireland, and saying, "You cannot both have all, so it must be cut in two, and part given to one and part to the other." Up to now all we have discussed is where the sword is to fall, how much of the body is to be given to each. None of us has seemed really alive to the atrocious indignity of it. Cannot we now speak out and say that we cannot allow such an atrocity to be perpetrated, that from the love we all bear to our country we cannot permit her to be rent asunder?

Another consideration enters into the subject since the War began. On all hands exclusion was spoken of as not good in itself, but as a makeshift necessary to avoid civil war. As things turned out civil war has been avoided. Is it not folly now if we continue to adopt a makeshift policy when the reasons which led to its adoption are gone, and when we have time and opportunity to devise a better?

THE IRISH POLICY

We have seen that no purely party policy will settle our difficulties. We have also seen that the lines of compromise hitherto suggested by English statesmen are open to the gravest objection, and will in effect leave the whole controversy open, to be fought over again at a later date. There remains one course of action before us, what is called here the Irish Policy. A better name would perhaps be the All-Ireland Policy.

To the explanation of this Irish Policy the rest of this pamphlet is devoted. It is as yet a thing intangible, since no effort has up to the present been made to reach an All-Ireland settlement, but the main conception may be set down in a few words. It is that we in Ireland should fall back on our own resources, that among ourselves we should attempt to find a solution of the Home Rule problem, not by means of a party triumph, but by an agreement among all the parties concerned.

CHAPTER III

SETTLEMENT BY CONFERENCE

AN Irish Conference to settle the Home Rule question is no new suggestion. Throughout the controversy it has been in the air, but up to the present there have always been good reasons against its adoption. In considering its advisability now it will be well to give a brief history of the proposal, noting the points which have been urged in its favour, and the causes which have in the past rendered it impracticable or inopportune. The latter, it will be found, have practically all ceased to exist.

The suggestion had been made long before the Home Rule Bill was introduced into Parliament. For instance, Mr. Erskine Childers, at the end of his book, *The Framework of Home Rule*, published in 1911, writes as follows: "If a Home Rule Constitution, passed into law in the heat of a party fight at Westminster, proves to be perfect, a miracle will have been performed unparalleled in the history of the Empire. At this moment a committee of Ireland's ablest men of all parties should be at work upon it, with an instructed

public opinion behind them. So only are good Constitutions made, and even the very best need subsequent amendment. Is it altogether idle to hope that some such body will yet come into existence, if not in time to influence the drafting of the Bill, at any rate to bring to bear upon its provisions the sober wisdom, not of one party only in the State, but of all ; and so, if it were possible, to give to the charter of Ireland in her ' new birth of freedom ' the sanction of a united people ? " (*The Framework of Home Rule*, pp. 338, 339.)

Under our existing party system a proposal such as this was impossible to carry out. The Bill had to come before Parliament as a definitely party measure, and to be discussed in a party spirit. One side was concentrated on pushing it through, and the other on opposing it might and main. It was clearly impracticable that men should amicably deliberate on the details of a proposal on whose fundamentals they entirely disagreed. A case like this shows the party system at its very worst. One cannot help wishing that some method might be devised by which the main lines of a proposal should be first settled by a party vote and details then amicably discussed. In lesser Bills the system of Select Committees has some such effect, but in a Committee of the Whole House it is impossible.

The debates in Parliament grew more and more bitter, till finally a pitch of exasperation

was reached such as the House of Commons had not seen for many years. Meanwhile in Ireland the danger of an appeal to force was becoming every day more real, thus gradually shifting the centre of the dispute from political parties to the rival Volunteers. But while parliamentary action was on the verge of a breakdown the proposal for a Conference was heard not once but frequently.

In a modified form the suggestion was acted upon, for "Conversations," "Negotiations," "Exchanges of Views" took place among the political leaders, culminating in the Buckingham Palace Conference. All the hopes placed in these negotiations proved illusory, but the reasons are obvious. The atmosphere of Parliament at the time, the "scenes" and fierce recriminations which were a feature of the debates, rendered it impossible that successful negotiations should take place in private between men who were attacking one another so bitterly in public. It was moreover a mistake that the negotiations were almost confined to the English leaders, the Irish rarely taking part. A still greater obstacle was, of course, the warlike preparations in Ireland. So long as the Volunteers were the real masters of the situation, there was little hope of reason being brought to bear.

In the end it appeared that the Bill was to be forced through Parliament by the sheer weight of the party steam-roller, and the controversy

settled outside of Parliament by violence and bloodshed. Nevertheless through all this unhappy time the idea of a settlement by Conference was never very far away, and it found its clearest expression at the very last moment, when too late to bring it about. This was in a really remarkable debate which took place in the House of Lords on the Amending Bill on July 1, 2, and 6, 1914, the sort of debate which proves the real use of a Second Chamber.

The note was first struck in a remarkable speech by the Archbishop of York, in which he said : " You will find that then there appears to be a suggestion always standing ready and waiting—the suggestion, I mean, that with a sufficiency of goodwill it might be possible for Irishmen themselves to arrive at a measure of self-government which would meet their respective desires, and which would not be inconsistent with any scheme of devolved government throughout the United Kingdom." Again : " Until this question can be got right away from the discussions and explosions of party feelings which arise in that House [of Commons] like storms on a Highland lake, I see little chance of agreement. But if Parliament will say to the two sections of the Irish people, ' We will stand aside for awhile ; we recognize that there may be a truce in this matter ; we will give you a fair field in which you can consider these matters together with a view to the unity and welfare of your whole

country,' I dare to believe that Irishmen on both sides would rise to the opportunity."

It is not strange that the suggestion should have come from one who was not a politician, and in reading the Archbishop's speech one feels that here at last the public, which is not interested in party triumphs so much as in a settlement, was finding a mouthpiece. This speech set the lines of the debate. Nearly all the succeeding speakers, who included many of the best known English and Irish Peers, were favourable to the idea of a Conference. Lord Dunraven and Lord Macdonnell strongly advocated it. Lord Curzon believed that it was going to come, but not yet. Lord Meath expressed very strong views as to making it altogether Irish. "I would say let no Englishman, Scotsman, or Welshman be in it. . . . I believe all our difficulties are caused through the intermixing of the British who are not Irish. That has been the trouble. If we Irishmen could only get together and get rid of the Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Welshmen I believe we could settle our differences in a very short time." These are remarkable words in the mouth of a Unionist.

One argument and one argument alone was brought against the proposal—namely, the extreme urgency of the crisis with which the country was faced. At a time when any trivial incident in Ireland might mean the outbreak of violence, it seemed folly to run the risk which would be

incurred in waiting for a Conference to do its work. Something had to be done at once, and the exclusion of Ulster or part of Ulster seemed the only course possible. For that reason, sufficient at the time, the proposal was again set aside.

From then events marched quickly. In less than a month we had seen the failure of the last attempt at agreement, the Buckingham Palace Conference, and a few days after we were at war.

Since the War began, a Conference was impossible till a few weeks ago. Now it is not merely possible, but almost a necessity.

The arguments in favour of a Conference remain as strong as ever, but the former urgent objections have passed away. If the diagnosis of the situation given in chapter ii is in any degree correct, than a settlement by consent is as necessary as ever before. The atmosphere is now as favourable to a Conference as formerly it was unpropitious. We have been purged of much of the worst evils of party spirit. We are no longer in danger of an outburst in Ireland, driving us to seek some temporary makeshift in order to avoid disaster. We have time to think and to plan, to erect a permanent structure instead of a makeshift.

Many plans were formerly tried to settle the Home Rule question, and they led us to the brink of destruction. By a miracle destruction was avoided, and we were given a second chance.

It will be sheer folly if we rely again on those same methods which so nearly ruined us before. Is it not merely common sense, that now, when the opportunity is given us, we should lay hold on that method, which, while it was impracticable, was pronounced to be the best ?

In following this course, which has been so often and so strongly advocated, we would not be attempting something unheard of in the world before. Conferences such as that proposed have on numerous occasions proved the most successful methods of political action in situations closely resembling our own. It may be worth while here to give a very brief account of some past Conferences. There is no need to dip into far distant history. We can take three examples from practically our own day, the South African Conference of 1906, and two Irish instances, the Recess Committee, and the Land Convention.

In the opening years of the present century South African statesmen were faced with a peculiarly difficult task, of reconciling and welding together two races which had just been engaged in an exceptionally long and determined war. After the war the two defeated provinces had been granted a large measure of self-government, enabling them to stand on the same footing as Cape Colony and Natal. But disputes among the four were frequent, and the attempts made to deal with them were unsuccessful. It appeared that rivalry between the provincial interests,

combined with the old racial bitterness, was to keep the country in a permanent state of friction and distrust. Sectional selfishness was to be the rule.

The new factor which brought about a settlement was the rise of a new conception of South African unity, of a South African nation comprising both British and Dutch, rising above those smaller things which kept them apart. Men began to see that to work together for the advancement of their whole country was a finer thing than to strive each for his own ends.

The result of this new spirit was a Convention of men from all the four provinces, which met for a considerable time in 1906, and which drew up the Constitution for the South African Union. In a gathering of men of two distinct races and holding many divergent views, there naturally was great difficulty in arriving at a working agreement. There had to be compromise, but these men were found ready to sink something of their own desires, and to allow for the opinions of those who thought differently from them, realizing that thus alone they could attain the agreement they were set upon. We know the result. The Conference drew up a plan of Union which passed through the Imperial Parliament practically as they had made it. The new Constitution has now been in force for some years and the conception of a united South Africa has become a settled one. It has proved its effective-

ness in the present War. There have, it is true, been a few who still think of themselves as Dutch first and South Africans after, but they have been of but small account against that all-embracing party, British and Dutch combined, led by that truly great man who once fought so stoutly against Great Britain and who now has shown himself the best friend of the Empire and of both sections of his own people. Have we no man who will prove the Botha of Ireland?

To come nearer home, we may glance at our former Irish Conferences. In August 1895, after the downfall of Parnell and the break-up of his party, Sir Horace Plunkett made the suggestion of a small gathering of representative men to consider "A proposal affecting the general welfare of Ireland"—namely, the formation of a Government department to assist agriculture and kindred pursuits. After some difficulty a very representative committee, which came to be known as the "Recess Committee" was got together. The larger section of Nationalists, the Anti-Parnellites, held aloof, but the Parnellites under the leadership of Mr. John Redmond took their share. Unionism, North and South, was well represented. The Committee also included many non-politicians, business men in particular. After prolonged discussion, and investigations both in Ireland and other countries, it drew up definite proposals for the formation of a "Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction."

The recommendations made by the Committee found support throughout the country, and, though postponed for some time, in 1899 an Act was passed through Parliament setting up the department on the lines suggested. The Recess Committee is a very definite landmark in Irish history, being the first occasion on which a legislative proposal of magnitude was carried through with the consent of all classes of Irishmen and as a result of their own deliberations. It struck to the ground the old fallacy that we could never arrange any matter amicably among ourselves.

The subject under discussion at the Recess Committee was not one which had previously aroused any violent ill-feeling, and so was considerably easier to settle than that with which the next Conference dealt. The Land Convention put its hand to one of the thorniest problems to be found in Ireland. Land Purchase had for some time been under discussion, both inside and outside Parliament, but all the suggestions on the subject had proved fruitless. It seemed impossible, so far as parliamentary action went, to find any course of action satisfactory to both landlords and tenants. Under these circumstances a meeting was suggested of representatives of those most closely concerned, and at the end of 1902 the Conference took place, consisting of landlords and of members of the Nationalist party, under the presidency of Lord Dunraven.

The upshot was that an agreement was reached as to the general lines which Land Purchase ought to take, and eventually the recommendations of the Convention were embodied in the Wyndham Act of 1903. In this instance we see most clearly the advantages of the method of "Settlement by Conference." Men who could do nothing but disagree so long as they harangued in Parliament or on platforms, found that when they were brought face to face their difficulties could be surmounted. In matters of this kind privacy and quiet conversation are infinitely more effective than speechmaking.

These two Irish Conferences are of most hopeful augury. While it cannot be maintained that the problems solved by them were so large or so difficult as that which confronts us now, nevertheless they were of considerable moment, and the Land question at any rate was one which had aroused ill-feeling for many years. The difficulties before the Land Convention are the same in kind though less in degree than those before us at present.

The three Conferences mentioned here had many points in common. In each case there was a long-standing quarrel, in which both sides held honestly and steadfastly to their convictions, but which was seen to be injurious in its effects. In each case a widespread desire for peace was manifest, but many believed the difficulties in the way to be insurmountable. In each case

men were found ready to risk their personal reputations and to attempt an extremely difficult task ; and in each case when these men met they were able to reach an agreement satisfactory to them all. Finally, after each of these Conferences, when the men whom their fellow-countrymen could trust had put forward their recommendations, these were gladly accepted by the nation at large.

Can we at present reproduce these conditions and these results ? We certainly have a long-standing dispute to settle, and a widespread desire to settle it. Have we statesmen who will risk all in order to bring about an agreement ? Have the Irish people the loyalty and the patriotism to support a Conference and to accept its conclusions ?

The answers to these questions time alone can give. It will, however, show that we are as a people at an extraordinarily low ebb, if at such a time as this we cannot find leaders broad enough and patriotic enough to seek not party gains or the enhancement of their own reputations, but the attainment of that peace which our country so urgently needs. The situation is much complicated by personal rivalries and antipathies, but the country has a right to demand that in so vital a matter personal feelings should not stand too much in the way.

The answer to the second question is easier. We have been called a " leader-loving " people,

in fact we are sometimes only too ready to follow unthinkingly a leader to whom we once have given our trust. In the present case this characteristic will be to the good. A policy backed by twenty or thirty representative men would almost certainly be hailed not merely with relief but with delight.

CHAPTER IV

A CONFERENCE IN BEING

WHILE considering in this chapter the personnel, methods, and objects of an Irish Conference, we must continually keep in mind the general conception of what it is to be. The ideal is a free, informal gathering of the wisest and most trusted men in the country, chosen partly as representatives of various points of view, but mainly as being patriotic and honest men. Their purpose would be to devise means by which an agreed settlement on the Home Rule question may be reached, so avoiding a possible calamity, and bringing permanent peace to Ireland.

Most of the details as to the composition and work of such a Conference can best be arranged when it is being summoned, but there are certain broad and general considerations which can be deduced from the history of past Conferences and from the facts of the present day.

As regards size, it has been the universal experience in the past that a Conference of this kind should be as small as possible, consistent with being thoroughly representative of the

country as a whole. No important point of view should be unrepresented, but at the same time the gathering must be kept within the limits of a committee, and not grow into a debating assembly. From this we may deduce that the delegates ought to number not less than fifteen and certainly not more than thirty, about twenty being perhaps the ideal number. One reason which might be given for twenty is that that is about the largest number of men which can be comfortably seated round a table! Whether round the proverbial table or not, it is a convenient size for a real working committee.

The method of selection of delegates requires great care. It may appear at first sight that the whole Conference might be composed of representatives of the parliamentary parties, but by such a course we would not secure by any means the best possible delegates. Without throwing any slur on our present members of Parliament, it will readily be admitted that they do not contain within their ranks all or nearly all the most capable public men who can be found. This would be true in any parliamentary country, but particularly in Ireland. Up to now the whole purpose of being in Parliament in any Irish party has been to vote straight for or against one particular measure. Concentration on a single issue, and the necessary evil of pledge-bound parties, has brought it about that the members of each party are very much of a type. There

has been little room for diversity or originality. The independent man, and also the moderate man, has been crushed out. Men of constructive and administrative ability have had practically no inducement to enter Parliament.

This position of affairs we may hope to see greatly altered in an Irish Parliament, and the change must begin at our Constitutional Conference. In it we will certainly need the strong party man, but we will also need the man who can see the point of view of his opponents, and the man who owns allegiance to no party at all.

The politicians would, however, naturally form the nucleus, and the first step might be to induce the parliamentary parties to select a fixed number of delegates out of their own ranks. These delegates should number less than half of the total membership contemplated.

It would then be possible to follow the example of the Recess Committee and let the other members be added simply by co-option, but on the whole it seems better that some at least of them should be chosen by other means.

Some delegates might be chosen by public bodies, but it is not very easy to determine what bodies should be given this right. Suppose, however, by way of example, that the Corporations of Dublin and Belfast, the County Councils' General Council, and the Council of Agriculture sent delegates, we should then secure two representatives each of urban and rural interests.

Perhaps the Chambers of Commerce might be represented, or such organizations as the Irish Agricultural Organization Society.

It would be well that some members should be nominated by a neutral party. The best person to do this might be the Lord Lieutenant, if a Lord Lieutenant is now appointed, acting, however, not in his official capacity as Lord Lieutenant, but as a gentleman closely in touch with Irish affairs, who yet by very reason of his position cannot be identified with any party. This question of nominations is not one about which there need be any heart-burnings, lest it should be used to weight the scales in any party's favour. It is suggested as the best way to secure the participation of certain men (as, for example, some members of the House of Peers), whose voice and influence would be of the utmost value, but who are unlikely to be chosen as delegates otherwise.

Representatives of political parties and public bodies, with those nominated, would account for the great majority of the delegates. As well as these the Committee should have considerable powers of co-option. These powers should be exercised in two ways. First, it would probably be necessary to bring in as regular members of the Conference several men whom the former processes of election and nomination had passed over. Secondly, men of expert knowledge might be co-opted for those parts of the deliberations

in which their advice would be particularly valuable. For instance, when the special subject under discussion was Finance it would be advisable to call in some financial experts, whose position and influence in the country might hardly warrant their participation in the whole of the proceedings.

If these lines of selection were adopted a Committee of twenty might be constituted somewhat as follows :

Unionist Party	4
Nationalist Party	4
O'Brienite Party	1
Representatives of Public Bodies	4
Nominated.	4
Co-opted *	3
<hr/>	
Total	20

This scheme of selection is not put forward as the best possible, but merely by way of suggestion. It may serve as a starting-point for discussion with a view to devising the best. Such a combination of election, nomination, and co-option ought to result in a varied and thoroughly representative assemblage, including men of some classes which at present are almost unrepresented in Parliament. The delegates should include business men, some of the landed gentry, men of leisure

* Exclusive of those who might be from time to time co-opted for special purposes as suggested above.

and learning. It would be well also if some younger men who are not widely known in politics should be included, for the views of the younger men at present often differ widely from those of the older leaders of the same party. The difficulty here is that most are now abroad.

It may be well to point out here that there is no need to aim at any exact numerical balance of parties. If a party has but few delegates it will still be able to make its voice heard sufficiently, and there will be little chance of minorities being voted down. Except in matters of small detail decisions must be arrived at unanimously, and in the last resort there is always open to any aggrieved minority the possibility of withdrawing altogether from the Conference. The withdrawal of any considerable section would, however, so shake the authority of the whole Conference that it would be greatly to the interests of a majority to avoid any action which would lead to a secession.

The question of Chairman may present some difficulty, as it is next to impossible to find any Irishman who is not already ticked off with a party label (in Ireland even the very fact of belonging to no party is in itself a party label), while it would be against the whole spirit of the proceedings to introduce as Chairman one who was not an Irishman. The simplest plan might be to allow the members, or some of them, to preside in rotation.

In order to prevent pressure being put on the delegates the meetings ought to be held *in camera*, and newspaper reporters excluded. The members would be better able to speak with the needed frankness if they knew that their remarks were not liable to be pulled to pieces and twisted out of all recognition by enterprising journalists writing leaders in the next day's papers. Any definite progress made or decision reached could be communicated to the press as a report.

An important point is that the deliberations should be unhurried. The successful Conferences mentioned in the preceding chapter all extended over a considerable time, running in some cases into many months. It would be safest to count on the Conference lasting quite six months, if we allow for the fact that it would not be able to sit continuously. This is an additional reason why steps should be taken soon to bring it into being.

The subjects for discussion by the Conference will be considered in some detail in the following chapters. Here it will suffice to say that the tangible result ought to be a series of very definite recommendations, needing only to be drafted into an Amending Bill to the Home Rule Act. An Amending Bill is certain in any case ; the purpose of a Conference would be to make it an agreed Bill, one which could pass through Parliament with the consent and backing of Ireland. It can hardly be questioned that if the Conference

could issue a definite agreed scheme for the Bill it would receive the backing both of the people of Ireland and of the British Parliament. Both would hail with gladness a real settlement of a question which has been a burden to them so long.

For this reason the delegates ought not to hesitate to put forward, if they think it best, a solution on some new lines, entirely different from any previously suggested. When we remember how the present Act was drawn up with the object of fitting as many interests as possible, with a concession here and a safeguard there, when we remember also how haphazard and unhelpful much of the discussions on it in Parliament were, then it will seem very probable that Irishmen meeting now in a new atmosphere of peace will change it in important respects.

In concluding this chapter it may be well to glance at one definite objection to a Conference. It will be said that the course proposed is unconstitutional; that it means setting up by the side of Parliament another body which will be in effect a legislative body. A Conference will not, however, usurp the functions of Parliament, for on any recommendations which it may put forward Parliament will have the final voice. The most important thing to remember is that in the period before the War the Irish question had really passed beyond parliamentary control.

The successful issue of a Conference would bring it under that control again. In a difficulty of this kind, where ordinary constitutional means have been found unavailing, some extra-constitutional procedure seems to be necessary.

CHAPTER V

PROBLEMS FOR A CONFERENCE

(a) ULSTER

THIS and the following chapter are devoted to a consideration of the two great tasks which will confront an Irish Conference. These are, first and foremost, the settlement of the Ulster question by agreement between Unionists and Nationalists ; secondly, the improvement of the Home Rule Act. In many respects the two tasks are closely intertwined.

Before entering on a consideration of how these questions may be dealt with, one word of caution is necessary. The main purpose of this pamphlet is to advocate a Conference, not to attempt the impossible feat of forecasting its results. All the suggestions which will be made in these chapters are to be looked on as purely tentative ; some of them may turn out to be thoroughly bad suggestions. But even if that be so, it does not in the least follow that a Conference is not our best course, for a gathering of our ablest and wisest men will surely be able to think out plans of

action much better than any which can be put forward at present.

The status of Ulster is now as formerly the most difficult problem. If it be the case, as was pointed out in chapter ii, that Home Rule in some form must come, and that Home Rule with Ulster excluded is disliked by all sections of Irishmen, then the chief task for a Conference is to devise some means by which Home Rule may be made acceptable to Ulster, so that without loss of her own principles she may unite with the rest of Ireland.

In the past the insuperable stumbling-block has been that neither side has been ready so much as to look at its opponent's point of view. Nationalists have simply shouted that Ulster must come in willy-nilly; Ulstermen have shouted back, "We will not have Home Rule." Each side has continued shouting so loudly that it could hear nothing except its own voice. We can now adopt a more reasonable procedure. It rests with Nationalists to point out the substantial advantages which will be gained by the inclusion of Ulster. It rests with Ulster to show how inclusion may be made acceptable to her. In this chapter we may consider the question from these two points of view.

Granted that some kind of Home Rule is coming, the arguments in favour of including all Ireland in its scope are overwhelmingly strong. To take the widest aspect first, the interests of

the Empire as a whole demand the inclusion of Ulster, for if there be any fear of a self-governing Ireland showing tendencies towards "separatism," then the addition to the Irish electorate of a body of men with the staunch Imperial loyalty of the Ulster Protestants is the best possible antidote.

Next, from the point of view of the United Kingdom as a whole it is altogether desirable to make Ireland one unit, and so to remove the many causes of friction which would arise if Ulster were excluded.

Turning to Ireland, it is certain that among South of Ireland Protestants the prospect of the exclusion of Ulster is looked on with the utmost dislike. When first proposed they regarded it as treachery on the part of Ulster. Without Ulster they would be an insignificant minority; with Ulster they would have an important place in the country, and would obtain a safeguard against any intolerance such as some of them dread.

For Nationalists the advantages of the inclusion of Ulster are too obvious to need mention. While Home Rule could be made a success without Ulster, yet the difficulties would be vastly increased.

It remains to consider the effect of exclusion on Ulster herself. One evil result of the last phase of the Home Rule controversy being centred on the question of exclusion is that most

of us have now got the idea firmly fixed in our minds that, whatever the other merits or demerits of the proposal, for Ulster at any rate exclusion would be advantageous. This notion is, however, entirely erroneous. Exclusion has never been advocated for any positive advantages, but merely as a makeshift to avoid civil war. If the people of Ulster will take the trouble to examine the proposal they will find out that, even looking at the matter selfishly, they will make the greatest possible mistake if they insist upon being excluded.

One disadvantage of exclusion is well pointed out by Sir Horace Plunkett in his pamphlet published just before the War, *The Better Way ; a Plea to Ulster not to desert Ireland*, in which he maintains that Ulster industries will greatly suffer if cut off from the economic life of the rest of the country. It seems to be the opinion both of economists and of practical statesmen that a country flourishes best with a mixture of agriculture and manufactures. To separate the agricultural and manufacturing districts into watertight compartments would be injurious to both, especially the latter.

An excluded Ulster would probably lose most of her trade with the rest of Ireland. Whether a regular boycott was instituted or not, it is certain that many persons in the south would be chary about buying the produce of those who had deliberately cut themselves off. Belfast might

lose her pre-eminence as a distributing and exporting centre.

Let us glance at the political status of an excluded Ulster. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that six counties were excluded, that would give Ulster twenty-five seats in the British Parliament. These seats are at present held by sixteen Unionists and nine Nationalists. Such a small array of voting strength would put Ulster on the level of a single English county, and that not one of the largest. Save in most exceptional circumstances Ulster could be disregarded by the British parties ; her wishes and grievances would find a deaf ear in the House of Commons. If, on the other hand, she will throw in her lot with the rest of Ireland, she will have a larger representation than any other province, and by using her power to mould Irish policy her influence on wider Imperial matters will in the end be greatly enhanced.

These industrial and political disadvantages are but some of the many drawbacks under which an excluded Ulster would labour. The anomalous position of the province or of the six or five or four counties would be a constant source of friction and annoyance. Disputes with the rest of Ireland would be continually arising, small in themselves, but troublesome. Differences of laws, even slight, would be a constant source of vexation to those living on the frontier, or to

those whose business lay partly in one section of the country and partly in the other. Ulster people would have to endure many of the disadvantages of Home Rule, without enjoying any of its benefits. Ulster would be neither in England nor in Ireland, but in that proverbially perilous position, between two stools.

Such are some of the disadvantages of an excluded Ulster. What would an included Ulster gain? First of all, if the matter is amicably settled by an Irish Conference, she will secure a lasting settlement, instead of having to look forward to years of uncertainty. She will gain stability for her industries, an improved market throughout Ireland for her produce, a large voting strength in the Irish Parliament, giving her a voice which in some cases may be the decisive voice.

Perhaps the most important gain would be something which it is hard to put into words, but which may be expressed by saying that Ulster would become the most popular part of Ireland. Throughout the controversy respect for Ulster was growing, and if now she should decide of her own accord to unite with the rest of Ireland, she would immediately attain a commanding position in the country. A declaration of comradeship from Ulster would work wonders, for trust begets trust. To those who argue their politics entirely in pounds, shillings, and pence such a "mere sentiment" may seem of little value, but in

reality it will make all the difference between success and failure under the new regime.

One result of a new comradeship of this kind would very probably be to give Ulster a considerable share in the Government. This is not the place to discuss the probable grouping of parties in an Irish Parliament, though it is certain to be widely different from the present. There are, however, many reasons for urging that the first Irish Cabinet should be a kind of Coalition, comprising the very best men in the country, so as to inspire confidence and give the best possible start to self-government. If such a Coalition were formed, Ulster ought to be represented in it. If our ablest statesmen had met in Conference already and come to agreement it would not be difficult to form an Administration out of their number.

A Coalition would undoubtedly break up afterwards, but it would at any rate tide the country over the early stages of Home Rule, and cause the eventual grouping of parties to be on new and better lines.

Having considered some of the arguments which should influence Ulster in the direction of inclusion, we may now turn to the stipulations which Ulster on her part might make. On this there is very little to guide us, since Ulstermen have never gone so far as to suggest any alterations which might make Home Rule more tolerable. A little light is thrown by a remark

made long ago by Sir Edward Carson, that what he dreaded under Home Rule was not legislative injustice, but injustice in the conduct of administration and in the exercise of patronage. This would point to leaving in the hands of Ulstermen a considerable control over their own local administration, in fact to setting up what has been called "Home Rule within Home Rule." This pleasant-sounding phrase has never been exactly defined, but the lines such a scheme might take may be learnt from the Amendments to the Bill which were put before the House of Lords by Lord Macdonnell on July 8, 1914. Translating the proposals from the language of Statutes to human speech, the salient points are as follows :

1. The Province of Ulster, while coming under the Home Rule Act, is to be regarded as a "special area."

2. For this "special area" an Ulster Council is to be set up, consisting of the Ulster Members elected to the Irish Parliament.

3. This Ulster Council is to have control over certain matters, known as the "divided services," in so far as they apply to Ulster.

The "divided services" are to be :

- (a) Education.

- (b) Matters now administered by the Local Government Board.

- (c) Matters now administered by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.

(d) Any other matters which may be transferred by Orders in Council.

4. The money required for the "divided services" is to be allotted to the Irish Parliament and the Ulster Council respectively by the Joint Exchequer Board.

5. A vote may be taken on the petition of one-fifth of the inhabitants of Ulster as to whether it is desirable to bring the Ulster Council to an end, and reunite the "divided services" under the Irish Parliament.

These proposals give the general lines of "Home Rule within Home Rule," but are, of course, capable of considerable variation. Of the particular matters which it is suggested should be left to Ulster the most important is education. If an Ulsterman is pressed as to definite points on which he is afraid of meeting with ill-treatment, he generally mentions education first of all, and it must be admitted with a good deal of reason. He would probably feel much happier if education were to be left in his own care.

"Home Rule within Home Rule" is not, however, the only course possible. Other proposals have been made, such as that of Sir Horace Plunkett, that Ulster should join with the rest of Ireland at first, but after a trial of Home Rule should be allowed to vote herself out afterwards if she desired. A clause to this effect might be inserted as a safeguard. Nationalists could feel

confident that if self-government proves as successful as they expect, a vote for exclusion will never become necessary.

Such a proposal as that of giving Ulster a representation in Parliament larger than that to which her population entitles her is hardly feasible, and savours too much of artificial constitution-building. Proportional representation, however, might be found desirable, so as to safeguard the interests of minorities.

A more important gain to Ulster than all these safeguards would be the improvement of the Home Rule Act. While to an absolutely uncompromising Unionist one kind of Home Rule may seem to be equally the devil's work as another, there are very many Unionists whose objections are not so much to the idea in itself as to the form in which it is embodied. By a Conference the present Act may be moulded into a form which would remove many objections. Some of the possible improvements are suggested in the following chapter.

The greatest difficulty in attempting to satisfy Ulster is, however, that Ulster has never put forward any demands, but simply a blank *non possumus*. Will not some Ulstermen come forward even now and say what can be done in order to meet their wishes?

It will be seen that there are large grounds for hope that by means of a Conference we may yet bring into being a united Ireland in our genera-

tion. We cannot, however, be certain that a Conference would succeed in this aim. Ulster might still insist on exclusion. But even so a Conference might not wholly fail, for it would probably effect a reconciliation between Nationalists and the Unionists of the south. This would be but a poor second-best compared with uniting all Ireland, and yet even such a second-best would be well worth attaining.

One point in conclusion. Suppose it to be found that exclusion is, after all, the only course, is there no better plan than to leave Ulster simply as she is at present, directly under the Imperial Parliament? Such a course is perhaps the least desirable of all. It would be far better to give Ulster a Government of her own, standing on the same sort of footing as the Irish Parliament. This would hardly be disagreeable to Ulster, and would be a less violent dismemberment of Ireland than the kind of exclusion put forward in 1914. It might prove a step on the road to unity. If two Governments were set up in Ireland, it would soon be found necessary for them to enter into relations with one another, and (as happened in the case of South Africa) when an avenue of approach was once established a fusion might ultimately take place.

CHAPTER VI

PROBLEMS FOR A CONFERENCE

(b) THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE HOME RULE ACT

WHETHER a Conference takes place or not, it is certain that the Home Rule Act must be amended. The purpose of a Conference would be to insure that the amendment is in a direction acceptable to Ireland, and such as will improve, not merely complicate, the existing measure.

The clauses of the Act which have come in for the severest criticism are those dealing with Finance, and all have to admit that some at any rate of the criticisms have been well founded. Such a book as Mr. A. W. Samuels' *Home Rule Finance* makes out a very strong case against many of the provisions. And it is not only Unionists who have criticised. Strong Nationalists are exceedingly dubious as to how the arrangements would work.

It is unnecessary to enter again into any detailed explanation or criticism of the Finance of the Act. Those who are interested in such matters have discussed it to their hearts' content, and the majority who never try to understand figures will not do so because they are set out here.

In the very roughest outline the financial scheme is as follows. Irish taxes are to be collected by the United Kingdom authorities, and from the United Kingdom authorities Ireland is to receive back the greater part of her income in the form of a "Transferred Sum." This "Transferred Sum" is to be composed thus :

(a) A sum representing the cost of Irish Services (that is, of the Irish Administration in general, except the "Reserved Services") at the time of the passing of the Act.

(b) A sum of £500,000 gradually diminishing to £200,000.

(c) A sum equal to the proceeds of any new taxation imposed by the Irish Parliament.

To the "Transferred Sum" is to be added a small amount to be derived from fee stamps and the revenue from the Irish Post Office. Taking the provisional figures given in the White Paper which explained the Bill (they are given here as summarized in Mr. Samuels' *Home Rule Finance*), we find the revenue of Ireland in the first year to be roughly as follows :

Sum representing the cost of	£
Irish Services (a) . . .	5,627,000
Sum of £500,000 (b) . . .	500,000
Post Office . . .	1,354,000
Fee Stamps . . .	81,000
<hr/>	
Total . . .	£7,562,000

Of these sums (*a*) will remain constant and (*b*) will diminish, while the only way in which the amount can be increased is by the imposition of fresh Irish taxation. The principal hope for the improvement of Ireland's financial condition is placed in economies which may be made in expenditure. In this direction something can be done, for Irish Government has been inordinately costly, but it would be folly to expect any enormous saving, especially as all present salaries and pensions of civil servants are guaranteed under the Act.

The fact remains that this seven and a half millions is to continue to be the main feature in Irish Budgets, and can be increased only with great difficulty. This fixed sum is admitted to be at present only barely sufficient, and it certainly would be quite insufficient to set on foot those many schemes of reform which it is hoped an Irish Government would undertake.

We need not enter here on the clumsy machinery of the Joint Exchequer Board, and the numerous complications which may arise under the dual financial control of the Irish Exchequer and that of the United Kingdom. These and other difficulties have been pointed out so frequently that only allusion to them is necessary. The whole scheme is complicated, inelastic, and thoroughly parsimonious towards Ireland.

It is, however, waste of time now to discuss the Act in detail, for the War and the new war taxation

have made revision essential. This revision may be conducted in either of two ways. It may be an attempt to patch up the old scheme so as to make it work somehow, preserving the main features as before ; or we may recognize that the whole scheme is obsolete, and that we have to alter it so radically as to make it entirely new.

The whole basis of the Finance of the Act has been overturned by the war taxation. The financial clauses were expressly drawn up to meet a situation in which Irish expenditure overbalanced Irish revenue. The exact contrary is the case now. Irish revenue overbalances Irish expenditure, and in addition Ireland is contributing several millions for Imperial purposes. On the estimated Treasury figures, given by Mr. McKenna in January, Ireland's revenue from taxation has risen from £9,627,000 to £17,457,000, while her expenditure remains fairly constant. We can now say with certainty that Ireland " pays her way."

We have, therefore, before Home Rule has come into force, reached the situation contemplated in Section 26 of the Act. That Section lays it down that when it shall be found that Irish revenue exceeds expenditure there shall be a " Revision by the Parliament of the United Kingdom of the financial provisions of this Act, with a view to securing a proper contribution from Irish revenues towards the common expenditure of the United Kingdom, and extending

the powers of the Irish Parliament and the Irish Government with respect to the imposition and collection of taxes."

The measure was framed in the expectation that such a state of things would not be reached till Home Rule had been for some time in operation. By untoward circumstances it has been reached even before the starting of Home Rule. This being the case it would seem only reasonable that the revision should take place at once, and that the probationary period which in normal circumstances would have come first should be omitted altogether. Now, if ever, is the time to recast the Finance of the Act.

The revision foreshadowed in the clause just quoted is first of all to secure "A proper contribution from Irish revenues towards the common expenditure of the United Kingdom." The "common expenditure of the United Kingdom" is in these days mainly for purposes of national defence, and after the War it will mainly be devoted to paying the expenses of the great contest. Towards safeguarding her against German rule, Ireland must be ready to pay her share, just as in the War she is giving her share of men. It might be well if Ireland's contribution was earmarked for these special purposes of defence.

The second purpose of the revision is "To extend the powers of the Irish Parliament and the Irish Government with respect to the imposition and collection of taxes." It is hardly to be

supposed that those who drew up the Bill had thought out what lines the revision might take, but they obviously contemplated that it would give the Irish Parliament increased and perhaps complete control of its revenue and expenditure. It has been frequently urged that complete control would give the best results both from an Irish and an English point of view. Wise direction and control of revenue and expenditure lie at the very foundation of all schemes for the betterment of Ireland, and the less hampering restrictions there are the better. Establishment of dual or triple control, as in the present Act, is the very way to ensure that money will be wasted and the resources of the country not used to the best advantage. Any simplification would be to the good.

Now that Ireland is more than paying her own expenses cannot we get rid of the Joint Exchequer Board and the other restrictions which would keep the Irish Government as it were in leading-strings? While some restrictions may have to remain, the regulations as to Customs for instance, yet the Irish Government should so far as possible be given a free hand. The collection of taxes should cease to be a "Reserved Service." Revenue ought to be paid direct into the Irish Exchequer.

It may appear to some that this extension of the powers of the Irish Parliament would increase the apprehensions of those who dislike

Home Rule, but in reality it would tend to satisfy them. The attitude of most Irish Unionists has been that while they dislike Home Rule, yet if it is to come it should be as elastic and unfettered as possible. Home Rule may be bad, but the very worst form is Home Rule with insufficient money and insufficient scope—"A nation in a strait-waistcoat," as some Irish Unionist has termed it. While English critics of the Act have complained that it went too far, Irish opponents have always attacked it as not going far enough. For instance, an English writer like Mr. F. S. Oliver, in advocating "Federalism," continually urges the retention under the Central Government of a number of matters—the control of labour disputes, for instance—which are just those which Irish Unionists would wish Ireland to deal with, if Home Rule has to come. The wider the scope of self-government the better will all in Ireland be pleased.

A Conference would very probably recommend the transfer of several of the "Reserved Services." The collection of taxes has already been mentioned. National insurance is a service which could certainly be better adapted to Irish needs. At present a scheme intended for an industrial country has been applied without adaptation to an agricultural one. Labour exchanges stand on a similar footing. Both should be transferred, and other services with them.

On a rather different footing stands the Royal

Irish Constabulary, which, under the Act, is to be placed in Irish control after six years. The reason of this postponement was to allay the fears of Irish Unionists ; but if Home Rule starts by agreement there seems no reason why the step should not be taken at once.

These are but a few examples of what might be done by an Irish Conference towards the improvement of the finance of the Act. There are also a number of smaller matters which claim consideration in the work of revision. As an instance we may take the anomalous position in which the Act stands with regard to proportional representation. The principle of proportional representation was introduced by Amendments in the House of Lords, and we have now a strange medley of that system and the old one. For the Irish House of Commons, " In any constituency which returns three or more members the election shall be held on the principle of proportional representation " ; in smaller constituencies on the old lines. In figures, 31 members will be chosen by the former system, 133 by the latter. This is a curious patchwork. While proportional representation may be good or bad, surely the whole House ought to be elected on a uniform system, by one method or the other. The Senate is to be elected uniformly on proportional lines, and here the method is probably the best. But as at present arranged each province is to form a single constituency. A constituency returning

14 members (as in the case of Ulster) is surely too large, even under proportional representation.

This is one of several comparatively small matters which need revision. More important is the question of Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament. At present Ireland is to be represented, but on a lower scale than she would be entitled to on a basis of population. She would be under-represented at any discussion which concerned her; and over-represented on the many subjects which would not concern her at all. Some more equitable system than this ought to be discoverable.

In discussing these and other details in an Irish settlement, we must not keep our eyes so entirely fixed on Ireland as to ignore a new factor which may set all our Irish affairs on a fresh footing. For years many of the wisest men throughout the Empire have been feeling their way towards some kind of Imperial Federation, and through the War it has been brought within the sphere of practical politics. The unbounded loyalty of the self-governing colonies and the splendid achievements of their armed forces have knit the Empire together, and given Canada, Australia, South Africa, and the rest a new importance. They must have a voice in arranging the terms of peace, and in the future that voice must be heard on other matters as well. It seems that we must devise some means to gather the general consensus of opinion of the Empire, some kind

of Council, leading up, perhaps, to the establishment of an Imperial Parliament which will be really imperial as representative of the whole Empire. How this might come about we are not concerned with here. It is enough to point out that it might mean a complete transformation of the Irish question. Irish difficulties would largely fade away if Ireland could come in as one unit under an Imperial scheme.

It may indeed be said that even under Imperial Federation the United Kingdom must remain a single unit, but it can be strongly urged that the differences between Ireland and England are probably as great as those between Canada and Australia. Ireland is of sufficient importance to have a voice of her own. If we are inclined to look on ourselves as a small people on a small island, and to shrink from comparison with the enormous size of the colonies, we can regain confidence if we look not on the square miles they cover but on their population. Ireland has a population four times that of New Zealand, three times the white population of South Africa, and that of the whole continent of Australia only exceeds ours by about half a million. Looking at these comparisons can any deny our right to a place of our own?

During the later stages of the Home Rule dispute we heard much of "Federalism," meaning devolution within the United Kingdom, as a means of settlement. After the War cannot we

take a wider sweep and settle the Irish question by means of a higher kind of Federalism embracing the whole Empire? The British Empire is a new thing in the world's history; scattered everywhere, yet as we now see united in spirit and in aim; most loyal where most free; unity in the widest diversity; a type and a prophecy of that "Federation of the world" which mankind may hope one day to see. The War is making the unity closer and the loyalty more intense, but if we are to see the spirit which now exists still lasting in times of peace, it will be by a firmer knit and more organic unity. In the midst of such a union are we still to see a discontented Ireland? No, rather in that union Ireland, which so long found the Empire irksome, may at last take her rightful place as an influential member of a great brotherhood of free peoples.

CHAPTER VII

THE TURNING-POINT OF IRISH HISTORY

IRELAND is to-day more nearly a united nation than she has ever been before. This may seem a bold and unwarranted statement when we think of the deep cleavages and the strong hostilities which exist in our national life ; yet if we compare the present with the past we will see that the differences now are not nearly so great as those which have separated Irishmen at nearly every former period. Ireland has always been a land of disunion and faction. The unity which we may attain now will not be the restoration of something which has formerly existed, but a new thing in Ireland's history.

This thought should give us hope ; in fact, the greatest cause for hopefulness is to be found in comparing the present with the past. If any are inclined to despair when they look at the many evils amongst us, their best tonic will be to read some description of Ireland fifty or a hundred years ago.

The history of the last hundred years is the history of the gradual building up of a united Ireland. The process has been slow and set-

backs have been numerous, but the change is unmistakable. It may be traced in the numerous Acts of Parliament which have removed injustices and have set all Irishmen on an equal footing—measures such as Catholic Emancipation, the Land Acts, the Education Acts (especially the Universities Act), and the establishment of County Councils.

It may be traced in the numerous movements for social and industrial betterment in which Irishmen of all creeds and parties have taken a share—for instance, the co-operative movement, the efforts for improvement of health or of housing, the Gaelic League, the call to “support Irish industries.” It may be traced, perhaps, most clearly in such semi-political efforts as the Recess Committee and the Land Convention. Both as a cause and as a result of all these happenings we find that a new spirit has been pervading the national life of Ireland, drawing Irishmen together, showing them that in their greatest interests they are united, and that all hope for themselves and for their country lies in their being united. There must be a vast difference between the feelings of the present-day Unionist and Nationalist towards one another and those of their respective great-grandfathers. Instead of looking on one another as natural enemies in every sphere of life, we see that friendship and co-operation are essential. The process of reconciliation has already gone far.

Up to now, in the formation of any movement which needed this co-operation a proviso has always been made that it had nothing to do with either politics or religion. It seems to be taken for granted that, while Irishmen can work together in almost any other sphere, yet as regards politics and religion they must remain in constant antagonism to one another.

Though this is not the place to enter on a discussion of the "religious difficulty," yet a few words on the subject may be necessary. There is no question that the religious cleavage is great and will remain, tending to divide us into two sections. Among men who hold their religious convictions strongly, as both sections of Irishmen do, a difference in religion is bound to be a big obstacle in the way of unity. But, we may ask, cannot men hold firmly to their own religious beliefs and yet be ready to work with those who differ from them? Is bitterness any real part of religion? Is it not rather the negation of religion? It is not from real religious convictions that our troubles arise, but much rather from unnecessary excrescences upon religion. Moreover, it has been proved again and again in recent years that differences of creed do not prevent Irishmen joining together and accomplishing most useful work for the good of their country. Religion is no insuperable obstacle to a true Irish unity.

The other matter on which antagonism has

been preserved is politics. Politics, however, ought not to be something apart from the ordinary affairs of life, but ought to reflect the real spirit of the country. What is needed now is to apply to politics—and in Ireland that means the Home Rule question—that new spirit of tolerance which elsewhere has stood us in such good stead.

As a climax to the unifying process has come the War. Here at last is a great issue on which the vast majority of us are united. Irishmen of all classes and parties are fighting as comrades and dying side by side. If in the past years constant rubbing had been wearing away the stone of division which stood between us, the remnant of it is now being blown away as though by dynamite. It may be that the horrors of the War were necessary for Ireland, that by the pouring out of tears and blood we may be purified and made really one. This may well prove to be the darkest hour which precedes the dawn.

It cannot, however, be too strongly or too often insisted that to secure unity we must reach a settlement of the Home Rule question. Opportunities like the present pass by if they are not seized. Unless we are wise enough to make use of an advantageous situation while it exists, we may find that the best chance Ireland ever had is gone for ever, and that we have slipped back into the old round of hostilities as before.

Very few will doubt the benefits of settling

once and for all the Home Rule question. It is unnecessary to point out more than one advantage here. The prolongation from decade to decade of this one great controversy has put an insuperable barrier in the way of many reforms and schemes of development which are most urgently needed. No question which arises in Ireland is discussed on its own merits, but merely on its effect for or against Home Rule. Abuses left thriving; unnatural grouping of parties; men divided who ought to be united; suppression of freedom of thought by the party machine; the hounding out of public life of any men who will not shout the party catchwords—such are some of the results of the country's obsession with the one great controversy. Both sides have been to blame, though it is hard to see how we can hope for anything better so long as the question remains open. Now we can settle it—if only we will.

There are several ways in which an Irish Conference may come about. Perhaps some of our party leaders may take the first step, but there is no concealing how difficult that might be. Political leaders must live in constant dread of every action they take being misrepresented, especially in these days when the press has carried misrepresentation to a fine art. Any honest advance towards a settlement on the part of either party may very likely be regarded by opponents as the overtures of a beaten foe, who

now knows that he is beaten and is trying to make what terms he can. The difficulties are increased by the personal dislikes and suspicions which exist. It is hard for men who have spent all their lives in attacking and manœuvring against one another to bring themselves to meet in friendly discussion.

But no true man will be deterred from doing his duty by such difficulties as these. The party man who makes the first step towards agreement may have to meet taunts from his opponents, and, what is still harder, from his supporters, but he will gain a greater thing, the lasting gratitude of his fellow-citizens and of future generations of Irishmen. The names of the men who bring peace to Ireland now will live in the hearts of a grateful people.

It may, nevertheless, be more likely that the first movement will come from men who have taken small active part in politics. What is needed at present is a thorough discussion of the whole situation in Ireland, and in this unknown men who have something to contribute can make themselves heard. Any sincere voice will be listened to now. This pamphlet is not meant to be an end, but the beginning of a discussion. If any can suggest other or better courses than those suggested here, then in the name of all they hold dear let them speak out. It is the duty of every one who has a vote or a voice to do what he can now to bring about a settlement.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to a settlement is simply the pessimism which so many Irishmen share. Seeing how often we have been disappointed when things looked brightest, they believe that in Ireland every bright hope is bound to fade, that all the old evils are bound to flourish still. Each new generation is to repeat the mocking catchwords of the last generation ; the party drums are to beat from now on to eternity. Some look on party strife as in some strange way inherent in our national character ; whatever else happens to Ireland she is always to have unrest. They put it down to our fighting spirit : we must always be breaking one another's heads except when, as at present, we can be provided with convenient heads to break belonging to a third party. As Mr. Yeats puts it, " Here neighbour wars with neighbour, and why there is no man knows."

Now even granted that we are a combative people, are there not advantages in changing the subject of dispute ? There will still be party contests under Home Rule, but they will be on questions definitely related to national development, not on lines that retard that development. As it is, we have spent generations over one issue, which itself is merely a starting-point. It is as though two football teams should spend all the time allotted to a match in wrangling over choice of ends.

But there are higher reasons for a settlement

than this, and securer hopes for its accomplishment. The progress which Ireland has made in recent years in all spheres of life ; the better feeling which has been brought about by the War ; the desire for peace at home which is shared by nearly all—these things give us strong grounds for confidence. We may recall the noble words of Henry Grattan, spoken on the day when all the work of his life seemed shattered to pieces : “ For I do not despair of my country ; she is not dead, but only sleeping.” If hope was possible on one of the darkest days in Irish history, have we any right to despair when so much looks bright ? Ireland is now neither dead nor sleeping, but alive and awake, ready to start on a new and better epoch of her history.

In this pamphlet no attack has been made on any class of Irishmen, not because there are no evils to attack, but because our principal need is to look at the good rather than the bad sides of one another. But there is one type of man (to be found in every party) who deserves the severest censure, that is the pessimist. We all know him, the man who believes that all our people are slack and selfish, that all our leaders and parties are self-seeking and crooked, that by some strange decree of Providence we must always live like a nation of Kilkenny cats. Such a man will criticize splendidly, but will do nothing to counteract the evils he sees at work. He is a type for which Ireland, and indeed every other

country, has no use, as he poisons the very springs of action for himself and others. It ought to be written in large letters on the boundaries of the new Ireland: "Notice—All pessimists will be shot at sight."

It is, of course, not to be expected that a settlement of the Home Rule question will of itself transform Ireland. No legislative measure can of itself bring prosperity, and a constitutional change perhaps least of all. If any fervent Home Ruler believes that on the day after the Act comes into operation all Irishmen will be prosperous and contented, he is bound to be thoroughly disillusioned. He will be like a mountain climber, who, when he thinks he has reached the summit, looks up and sees it towering high above him still. The road of national progress is long and arduous and there are few short cuts. And yet the settlement of the Home Rule question would be a very definite landmark on the road. Until that is reached, the way to other objects which we wish to attain is almost hopelessly barred. It is just because there are so many tasks waiting to be done that all must wish for a final ending of that dispute which has absorbed far too much of our energies.

The future historian will say that this present time marked a crisis in the history of Ireland. What kind of verdict he will pass depends on the actions of us into whose hands is committed the present destiny of our country. He may have to

point to us as the men who let slip the fairest opportunity our country has ever had. He may be able to say that from our time dates the beginning of brighter days for Ireland. On no past generation of Irishmen has rested a greater responsibility. The Ireland of the future will be what we make it now.

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